

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-14 ISO-00 SSM-05 SIG-03
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DRAFTED BY NEA/P:WBHARRIS
APPROVED BY NEA/P:GFSHERMAN
S/PRS - MR. CARTER
H - MR. FLATEN
SSM - MR. MC ANDREW
NEA/IAI - MR. SMITH
NEA/ARP - MR. TWINAM
NEA/EGY - MR. NEWBERRY
NEA/ARN - MR. DRAPER

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O 140056Z MAR 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
USCINCEUR
JCS
DOD
CIA
USIA
NSC

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CINCEUR FOR POLAD, TEL AVIV FOR PAO, DELIVER BY 9 A.M.

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - MARCH 13

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE
EXCERPTS FROM DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR MARCH 13, 1978.
FYI ONLY, SPOKESMAN TODAY WAS HODDING CARTER III.

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Q. HAS THE UNITED STATES QUESTIONED OR CHALLENGED SAUDI
FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE PLO? HAVE WE EVER CRITICIZED?

LET'S PUT THE QUESTION A DIFFERENT WAY. IT IS ESTABLISHED,
AS FAR AS I KNOW, THAT SAUDI ARABIA HAS GIVEN FINANCIAL
SUPPORT TO THE PLO, SUPPORT THAT AMBASSADOR WEST WAS TOLD
WAS PRIMARILY FOR REFUGEES. I ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT THE
AMBASSADOR WHEN HE APPEARED ON THE HILL LAST THURSDAY
SAID THAT AS FAR AS HE KNEW THE UNITED STATES HAD NEVER
QUESTIONED, IN THE SENSE OF CHALLENGE, CRITICIZED THAT
AID. DO YOU KNOW, DOES THE UNITED STATES STATE DEPARTMENT
KNOW WHETHER SAUDI ARABIA HAS GIVEN FINANCIAL AID TO THE
PLO FOR ANY REASON?

A. LET ME SAY THAT I DO NOT HAVE A FACTUAL ANSWER ON
THAT ONE FOR YOU. I WOULD NOT WANT TO VENTURE A GUESS
OF HOW IT WOULD COME. I WILL TAKE THE QUESTION.

Q. WHAT EFFECT WILL THE WEEKEND EVENTS HAVE UPON THE
PEACE PROCESS?

A. LET ME SAY A COUPLE OF THINGS ABOUT THAT. THE ACT
OF VIOLENCE IS CLEARLY AIMED AT UNDERMINING THE EFFORTS
TO REACH A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF THE MIDDLE EAST
CONFLICT. ACTS SUCH AS THESE AND THIS ONE IN PARTICULAR
ONLY INCREASE TENSIONS AND CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF
BITTERNESS NOT CONDUCTIVE TO NEGOTIATIONS FOR A GENUINE

PEACE SETTLEMENT.

HAVING SAID THAT, I WANT TO ADD THAT WE DO NOT INTEND TO ALLOW THIS ACT TO ACHIEVE ITS AIM, ITS AIM OF UNDERMINING THE PEACE PROCESS. OUR EFFORTS WILL CONTINUE AND WE HOPE ALL THOSE COMMITTED TO A COMPREHENSIVE AND JUST SETTLEMENT WILL ALSO KEEP THEIR EYES ON THIS GOAL.

Q. HAS THIS GOVERNMENT BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE GOVERNMENT
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OF ISRAEL ABOUT A POSSIBLE RETALIATORY RAID?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO GO INTO DETAILS OF OUR DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS WITH ISRAEL OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT IN THE AREA. I WANT TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT IT THOUGH.

THE TERRORIST ACT OBVIOUSLY PRESENTS ISRAEL WITH A VERY PAINFUL AND SERIOUS DILEMMA. IT HAS LEGITIMATE SECURITY INTERESTS WHICH MUST BE PROTECTED. AT THE SAME TIME NO ONE WANTS TO ADD TO THE SUFFERING AND LOSS OF INNOCENT LIVES ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

Q. WELL, IN OTHER WORDS, ARE YOU TRYING TO DISCOURAGE ISRAEL FROM TAKING DIRECT RETALIATION AGAINST THE REFUGEE CAMP, FOR EXAMPLE?

A. AGAIN, I AM REALLY NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH ISRAEL OR OTHER PARTIES IN THAT AREA. I THINK THAT WHAT I HAVE JUST SAID CONSTITUTES MY ANSWER.

Q. YOUR STATEMENT REFERS TO SECURITY INTERESTS OF ISRAEL. HAS THE TERRORIST ATTACK ON ISRAEL, WHICH OBVIOUSLY WAS A BREACH OF SECURITY, CAUSED THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO RECONSIDER ITS POSITION THAT THE SETTLEMENTS AND THE AIR FIELDS AND OTHER MEASURES WHICH ISRAEL

CONSIDERS TO BE SECURITY PROTECTIVE -- HAS THE STATE DEPARTMENT BEEN CAUSED TO RECONSIDER ITS POSITION THAT THOSE SETTLEMENTS AND THAT THOSE AIR FIELDS SHOULD BE REMOVED, ARE ILLEGAL, ARE AN OBSTACLE TO PEACE OR ARE YOU NEWLY AWARE OR NEWLY CONSCIOUS OF ISRAEL'S SECURITY PROBLEMS SO THAT MAYBE THERE IS A CAUSE FOR THEM TO TAKE
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CERTAIN SECURITY MEASURES YOU DIDN'T SEE LAST WEEK?

A. NO. I THINK THAT I WOULD REPEAT WHAT A SENIOR OFFICIAL SAID TO A NUMBER OF YOU LATE LAST WEEK BEFORE

THE RAIDS; THAT THERE ARE OBVIOUS AND LEGITIMATE SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE AREA; THAT ISRAEL HAS SUCH INTERESTS. OUR POSITION IN ANY CASE HAS BEEN THAT WHILE WE HAVE AND CONTINUE TO HAVE POSITIONS ON SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS WHICH WE HAVE MADE CLEAR, THAT THE ISSUES THEMSELVES MUST BE RESOLVED IN DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTIES AND THAT WHAT I WOULD SAY IN PARTIAL RESPONSE TO YOU ONLY IS THAT THIS PARTICULARLY BRUTAL ACT OF TERRORISM SIMPLY MUST NOT BE PERMITTED TO PREVENT THOSE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE MATTERS THAT YOU RAISE AND OTHER ISSUES IN DISPUTE IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

Q. WOULD YOU SAY THEN THAT ISRAEL'S SECURITY WOULD BE ENHANCED IF IT, FOR INSTANCES, WITHDREW FROM THE WEST BANK, PERMITTED A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND TO BE SET UP? THAT SAME OFFICIAL SAID THAT THE UNITED STATES DOESN'T WANT THE WEST BANK TO BE A STAGING GROUND FOR PALESTINIAN RADICALS. BUT THERE IS SOMEWHAT OF A GAP BETWEEN THAT AND WITHDRAWAL. WOULD YOU THINK THAT WOULD ENHANCE ISRAEL'S SECURITY?

A. I THINK THE GENERAL ANSWER TO THE QUESTION IS TWO-FOLD. THE VIOLENCE WHICH WE DEPLORE DOES NOT CHANGE THE POSITIONS WHICH WE HAVE STATED A NUMBER OF TIMES AND WHICH I REALLY DON'T SEE MUCH POINT IN GOING THROUGH AGAIN. I CAN JUST SAY IN A BLANKET WAY THAT THE LITANY IS UNCHANGED.

Q. AND IT DOESN'T CHANGE OUR VIEW OF ISRAELI SECURITY? WHATEVER OUR VIEW IS OF ISRAELI SECURITY NEEDS TERRITORIA-LLY, THEY REMAIN THE SAME?

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A. OUR POSITION HAS BEEN STATED HERE A NUMBER OF TIMES. IT IS UNCHANGED.

Q. HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR POSITION ABOUT SAUDI ARABIA

BEING A CONFRONTATION STATE IN LIGHT OF THEIR COMMENTS REGARDING THE TERRORIST ACT AND DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT THE SAUDI COMMENTS?

A. YES. ACTUALLY WE NOTE THAT THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR ALIREZA PUT OUT A STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT IN WHICH HE SAID THAT ALL SENSIBLE PEOPLE DEPLORE ACTS OF TERRORISM. HE HAS SINCE TALKED TO HIS FOREIGN MINISTER. HE HAS CONFIRMED THAT THE RIYADH RADIO COMMENT TO WHICH YOU REFER DOES NOT REFLECT THE OFFICIAL SAUDI POSITION. THE OFFICIAL POSITION IS CONTAINED IN AMBASSADOR ALIREZA'S (STATEMENT).

BUT LET ME GO ON, HOWEVER, AND JUST POINT OUT GENERALLY THAT WE WOULD, OF COURSE, AND DO REGRET ANY STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT FOR AN ACT OF WANTON TERRORISM. I HAVE, HOWEVER, I THINK, DEALT WITH TWO PARTS OF THE QUESTION.

Q. THERE IS NO DOUBT, IS THERE, IN THE UNITED STATES' MIND THERE WAS SUCH A STATEMENT?

A. I JUST SAID SO. I JUST SAID IT WAS REPUDIATED.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHETHER THE AMBASSADOR'S STATEMENT WAS BROADCAST OVER RIYADH RADIO?

A. I HAVE NOTHING FURTHER AT THIS POINT. TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, FINDING THAT ONE ON THE FILE WAS A LITTLE UNCLASSIFIED

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INTERESTING, THE ORIGINAL STATEMENT TO CONFIRM THAT IT WAS, IN FACT, AS SAID.

I HAVE HERE THAT THE AMBASSADOR TALKED TO HIS FOREIGN MINISTER AND THAT WHAT HE SAID IS THE OFFICIAL SAUDI POSITION. I DO NOT KNOW THE ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION.

Q. I WAS SIMPLY TRYING TO FIND OUT IF THAT OFFICIAL SAUDI POSITION HAS ALSO BEEN BROADCAST TO THE ARAB WORLD.

A. I DON'T KNOW.

Q. EVEN IF THAT STATEMENT WAS UNOFFICIAL, DOES IT CHANGE THE STATE DEPARTMENT THINKING AT ALL ABOUT SAUDI ARABIA?

A. NO.

Q. WHY NOT?

A. WAIT A MINUTE. I AM NOT SURE WHY I HAVE TO ANSWER THAT.

Q. WELL, IT IS STILL AN EXPRESSION OF A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF THINKING IN SAUDI ARABIA, IS IT NOT, THE FIRST EXPRESSION?

A. I CAN'T GUAGE WHAT IT REFLECTS. WHAT I AM SAYING IS I AM TOLD IT DOES NOT REFLECT THE OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT POSITION ON THIS RAID. AS TO WHO IT REFLECTS, I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO SPECULATE.

Q. IS THERE A FIRM TIME SET YET ON PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S TRIP HERE?

A. YES. IT IS GOING TO BE REPEATED AS A DUPLICATE BUT
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ONE WEEK LATER, I.E. THE SCHEDULED ARRIVAL IS MONDAY
NIGHT OF NEXT WEEK AND THE SCHEDULE RUNNING FOR TWO
DAYS THEREAFTER.

Q. MONDAY NIGHT WHERE? IN WASHINGTON?

A. HERE. AS I UNDERSTAND, THE ENTIRE SCHEDULE IS JUST
SIMPLY PUT UP A WEEK.

Q. MONDAY AFTERNOON?

A. MONDAY 4:30 OR WHATEVER IT WAS.

Q. TO GO BACK A PREVIOUS QUESTION ABOUT OUR APPROACHES
TO THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT ABOUT RETALIATION, HAS
SECRETARY VANCE SEEN AMBASSADOR DINITZ SINCE THE
COMMANDO RAID OR TALKED WITH HIM?

A. I AM NOT AWARE OF HIS SEEING HIM, THAT IS, PHYSICALLY
BEING IN HERE. JOHN, DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING?

MR. TRATTNER: HE TALKED WITH HIM ON THE TELEPHONE
YESTERDAY.

Q. HAVE YOU RECEIVED ANY INFORMATION FROM THEM ON ANY
RETALIATORY ACTION?

A. NO.

Q. YOUR ORIGINAL STATEMENT ABOUT THE RETALIATION IN

WHICH YOU SAY AT THE SAME TIME NO ONE WANTS TO ADD TO
THE SUFFERING AND LOSS OF INNOCENT LIVES ANYWHERE IN
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THE WORLD, ARE YOU IMPLYING A DISTINCTION BETWEEN AN
ISRAELI RETALIATION AGAINST COMBATANTS OR GUERRILLAS
AND A RETALIATION AGAINST WHAT YOU CALL INNOCENT LIVES,
PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT INVOLVED? IS THERE SOME DISTINCTION
IN HERE THAT YOU ARE TRYING TO SUGGEST?

A. I THINK OBVIOUSLY WHAT THE STATEMENT IS SEEKING TO
DO IS TO ADDRESS EXACTLY WHAT IT ADDRESSES. I MEAN I
DON'T THINK I CAN READ ANYTHING FURTHER INTO IT THAN
WHAT IT SAYS.

Q. IT SOULDS TO ME IF THEY CAN MAKE A PRECISE ENOUGH

STRIKE WHERE THEY ONLY HIT THE PLO AND NOT INNOCENT LIVES, THAT WE ENDORSE THAT FROM THIS STATEMENT.

A. I AM REALLY NOT IN A POSITION TO SAY ANYTHING OF THE SORT.

Q. ARAFAT AND THE PLO SEEM TO BE TAKING CREDIT FOR THE RAID. DOES THIS EXCLUDE THEM FOR ALL TIMES IN THE AMERICAN EYES FROM THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS?

A. LET ME JUST SIMPLY SAY THAT ANYONE WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS RAID IS AUTOMATICALLY INCLUDED IN THE TOTAL CONDEMNATION THAT WE HAVE EXPRESSED FOR ITS EFFECTS AND THE FACT OF IT.

Q. HAVE YOU FIGURED OUT WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS RAID YET?

A. OBVIOUSLY WE HAVE SEEN A NUMBER OF REPORTS.

Q. BUT I MEAN, DO YOU CREDIT THEM?

A. DO I HAVE AN ASSESSMENT AT THIS TIME? NO, I DO NOT HAVE ONE.
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Q. WE ALL HAVE REPORTS. DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAVE A JUDGMENT AS TO WHO PAID FOR THE RAID AND WHO CARRIED IT OUT? DO YOU KNOW THAT?

A. I DON'T. OBVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO ISRAELI SOURCES, THAT THERE WERE CERTAIN PEOPLE INVOLVED. AS TO WHO THEY REPRESENTED -- MORE THAN THAT I DON'T HAVE IT NOW. I WOULD EXPECT THAT OVER THE COMING DAYS WE ARE GOING TO GET A LOT CLEARERE PICTURE.

Q. WELL WHAT ARE YOU CONDEMNING? YOU ARE CONDEMNING THE ACT?

A. THAT'S RIGHT.

Q. AND YOU ARE CONDEMNING THE DEAD TERRORISTS.

A. AND I AM CONDEMNING WHOEVER IS RESPONSIBLE.

Q. AND THAT'S ABOUT AS FAR AS IT GOES -- AND WHOEVER MIGHT BE RESPONSIBLE, BUT YOU DON'T KNOW WHO THAT IS YET.

A. NOT YET.

Q. WHAT DOES THIS DO ABOUT THE FUTURE NEGOTIATING

POSITION OF THE PLO AS FAR AS THIS GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED? YOU JUST SAID THAT THE CONDEMNATION COVERS ANYBODY RESPONSIBLE. BUT YOU DIDN'T ANSWER ABOUT THE FUTURE NEGOTIATING ASPECT.

A. WELL WAIT A MINUTE. I HAVE NOTHING TO ADD BEYOND UNCLASSIFIED

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THE STANDARD FORMULATION THAT WE HAVE USED IN ANY CASE, ABOUT THE PLO.

Q. SO YOU ARE SAYING THAT THIS DOES NOT CHANGE THAT STANDARD FORMULATION IN ANY WAY OR SHAPE.

A. IN THE FIRST PLACE, I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO SAY THAT THIS IS, IN FACT, DIRECTLY LINKED OR NOT DIRECTLY LINKED, TO ANY PARTICULAR ORGANIZATION. I WILL SAY GENERALLY, YOU KNOW, BARRING CLEAR INFORMATION WHICH MIGHT ESTABLISH SOMETHING, THAT THE FORMULATION WE HAVE ALWAYS USED REMAINS THE SAME.

Q. THERE IS A REPORT OUT OF BEIRUT THAT THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE MOVEMENT HAS AFFIRMED THAT THE NEXT FEW DAYS WILL WITNESS FURTHER FEDAYEEN OPERATIONS AGAINST ISRAEL. HAS THE STATE DEPARTMENT SEEN THAT REPORT?

A. OH, I AM CONFIDENT IT HAS BEEN SEEN, BUT WE WOULD SIMPLY SAY IN ADVANCE THAT THAT WOULD BE MORE THAN REGRETTABLE. IT WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE. BUT LOOK, I HAVE NO IDEA OF THE SOURCE FOR THAT.

Q. IS THE UNITED STATES MAKING ANY REPRESENTATION TO AUTHORITIES IN LEBANON?

A. AGAIN, I AM NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO GO INTO THE DIRECT SUBSTANCE OF DISCUSSIONS, BUT WE HAVE CLEARLY HAD DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON.

Q. WHAT IS THE LEBANON CONCERN ON THIS QUARTER? ARE WE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM?

A. THEY HAVE A GENERAL CONCERN ABOUT THE SITUATION.

Q. HAS THE UNITED STATES SOUGHT TO DISSUADE ISRAEL FROM UNCLASSIFIED

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TAKING RETALIATORY ACTION?

A. AGAIN, I REALLY AM NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO GO BEYOND THE STATEMENT -- IN EITHER CONFIRMING OR DENYING BOTH

THE REPORT THAT I THINK WE ALL SAW -- OR RESPONDING MORE DIRECTLY TO YOUR QUESTION.

Q. IN YOUR ANSWER BEFORE YOU SAID THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAS A GENERAL CONCERN. DO YOU MEAN CONCERN RESPONSIBILITY, OR CONCERN ANXIETY?

A. CONCERN ABOUT THE WHOLE SITUATION.

Q. WELL CONCERN MEANS TWO THINGS, IT'S AN AMBIGUOUS WORD. DO THEY HAVE SOME RESPONSIBILITY? OR DO YOU MEAN THAT THEY ARE ANXIOUS AS TO WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN NEXT?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO RAISE THE QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY BECAUSE WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW AND WHAT I DON'T KNOW -- AND WHAT IN FACT AT THIS TIME APPARENTLY NOBODY SEEMS TO KNOW IS -- THE STAGING AREA, OR THE HOME PORT, OR ANYTHING ELSE ABOUT THE TERRORISTS THEMSELVES.

Q. BUT YOU KEEP DECLINING TO ANSWER THE QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER WE HAVE ASKED THE ISRAELIS NOT TO RETALIATE. WHAT IS THIS GOVERNMENT'S VIEW ABOUT WHAT EFFECT AN ISRAELI RETALIATION WOULD HAVE ON THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORT?

A. THE GENERAL VIEW THAT I HAVE IS THAT ANY COMMENTS I MIGHT MAKE ON THE SPECULATION OF WHAT MIGHT BE OUR VIEW, ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN -- IF SOMETHING HAPPENS -- ISN'T UNCLASSIFIED

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GOING TO BE USEFUL IN THIS SITUATION. I DON'T HAVE ONE.

Q. IN YOUR OWN JUDGMENT, ARE YOU SAYING THAT LEBANON HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH THAT RAID?

A. I HAVE NO JUDGMENT ON THE QUESTION WHATSOEVER. I AM NOT OFFERING A JUDGMENT.

Q. WELL WE'VE GOT TO HAVE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE PLO AND LEBANON -- AND THE LEBANESE PEOPLE AND LEBANON ITSELF.

A. THERE ARE CLEAR DISTINCTIONS ALONG THAT LINE.

Q. BECAUSE MANY REPORTS HAVE INDICATED, IT SOUNDS LIKE THE LEBANESE PEOPLE ARE ATTACKING THE ISRAELIS FROM LEBANON.

A. AS A MATTER OF FACT, I AM NOT HERE SAYING WHO IS ATTACKING, BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW.

Q. YOU DON'T ACCEPT, IN OTHER WORDS, THE STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO THE PLO, THAT IT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT?

A. I AM IN NO WAY TO JUDGE REPORTS WHICH COME OFTEN FROM UNIDENTIFIED, SUPPOSED SOURCES, AND THE OTHER. I SIMPLY AM NOT NOW IN A POSITION TO JUDGE WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RAID. THAT IS UNDOUBTEDLY GOING TO CHANGE.

Q. BY WHAT? WHAT WOULD HAPPEN?

A. CHANGED, I ASSUME, BY PEOPLE IN FACT STEPPING FORWARD AND SAYING CONCRETELY, "YES", "NO," OR INDIFFERENTLY -- OR BY THE ISRAELIS ESTABLISHING SOMETHING ON THE BASIS OF PEOPLE THAT THEY HAVE IN THEIR UNCLASSIFIED

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CUSTODY.

Q. HAVE YOU RAISED THIS ISSUE WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA?

A. I DON'T KNOW.

Q. HAVE YOU HEARD ANYTHING FROM EGYPT ON THE ISRAELIS-- ANYTHING THAT HASN'T BEEN PUBLISHED? HAS EGYPT SAID ANYTHING, MADE ANY COMMENTS?

A. I AM NOT AWARE OF ANY.

Q. NOW THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED WRITTEN REACTION FROM

THE HILL ON THE PROPOSED PLANE DEAL INVOLVING EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA AND ISRAEL, IS THERE ANY CONSIDERATION BEING GIVEN TO DELAYING THE (INAUDIBLE) TO CONGRESS?

A. NO, ABSOLUTELY NOT.

Q. REGARDING SAUDI ARABIA, WHAT I'D LIKE TO KNOW IS WHETHER THE STATE DEPARTMENT KNOWS IF SAUDI ARABIA IS FINANCING THE PLO? DOES IT KNOW IF THAT MONEY GOES TO PALESTINIAN REFUGEES OR/AND TO TERRORISTS? HOW WOULD THE STATE DEPARTMENT KNOW HOW THE MONEY IS APPORTIONED IF IT AGREES WITH THE AMBASSADOR, OR IF IT IS AS THE AMBASSADOR HAS BEEN TOLD, THE MONEY GOES TO REFUGEES? YOU HAVE REFERRED HERE TO CONVERSATIONS WITH ISRAEL AND WITH LEBANON REGARDING THE TERRORIST INCIDENT AND ITS AFTERMATH. CAN YOU TELL US WHAT OTHER GOVERNMENTS THE UNITED STATES HAS TALKED TO SINCE THE ATTACK?

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A. I DOUBT THAT I HAVE A COMPLETE LISTING, BUT LET ME SEE WHAT I CAN GET ON THAT. ON THE OTHER QUESTIONS, I'M NOT SURE WHAT OUR POSTURE NORMALLY IS ABOUT THAT. I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN GET.

Q. I THINK THERE WILL BE MORE CONTROVERSY, AS THE DAY GOES ON, FROM THE HILL ON THE SUBJECT. IT'S BEEN GOING ON SINCE YESTERDAY AFTERNOON.

Q. THE THRUST OF THAT QUESTION REALLY IS, IF THE SAUDI ARABIANS ARE FINANCING THE PLO, SHOULD THE UNITED STATES SELL IT PLANES?

A. THAT IS NOT THE THRUST OF MY QUESTION.

A. I KNOW THE THRUST OF THE QUESTION. IT'S WHERE THE ANSWERS WILL TAKE US.

Q. THAT IS NOT THE THRUST OF MY QUESTION. IT MAY BE WHY THE HILL IS SO HOT ON THE SUBJECT RIGHT NOW. BUT I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT OUR STAUNCH, MODERATING FORCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND ANY SUPPORT IT MAY BE GIVING TO THE PLO. THAT'S WHY I'M ASKING.

A. I'VE GOT IT.

Q. WOULD THE UNITED STATES GO ALONG WITH ISRAEL RADING SOUTHERN LEBANON?

A. WHAT I AM SAYING TO YOU IS THAT MY POSITION ON THIS

ENTIRE SUBJECT HAS ALREADY BEEN ARTICULATED. WE, OF COURSE, OBVIOUSLY, CONTINUE TO HOPE FOR A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF ALL MATTERS. BEYOND THAT, THOUGH, THERE IS NOTHING I CAN SAY.

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Q. IN RESPONSE TO A COLUMN YESTERDAY IN THE "POST," THERE ARE A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS: HAS THE UNITED STATES BEEN, IN ANY WAY, ENCOURAGING IRAN TO CUT BACK ON OIL SHIPMENTS TO ISRAEL AS FORCED CONCESSIONS AND HAS THE UNITED STATES, AS THIS COLUMN SAYS, URGED CERTAIN COUNTRIES NOT TO BUY WEAPONS FROM ISRAEL?

A. NO.

Q. TO BOTH?

A. YES. THERE IS NO OFFICIAL POLICY OF THIS

GOVERNMENT -- AND LET ME TRY TO DISTINGUISH SOME THINGS HERE, BECAUSE I WILL CONCEDE SOMETHING AND THEN GO FORWARD AND SAY NO, ANYWAY. NO, THERE IS NO POLICY TO DO SO.

NO, WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY SUCH INCIDENTS HAVING HAPPENED. AND THEN, I AM TOTALLY INCAPABLE OF TELLING YOU THAT SOMEBODY AT SOME LEVEL SOME TIME MAY NOT HAVE SAID SUCH A THING. I'M SIMPLY TELLING YOU, NO ONE HAS EVER BEEN AUTHORIZED, THAT ANYBODY IN THIS BUILDING KNOWS ABOUT, TO SAY SUCH A THING. WE ARE NOT AWARE OF IT HAPPENING, AND WE HAVE CHECKED. I MEAN, OBVIOUSLY, THE COLUMN CAUSECD QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AND WE ASKED THEM.

Q. YOU'RE NOT SPEAKING ABOUT IRAN OR THE OTHER MATTER, OR BOTH?

A. I'M SPEAKING ABOUT THE ARMS MATTER, AND I JUST SIMPLY DON'T KNOW. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF ATTENTION PAID TO THAT COLUMN YESTERDAY AND I THINK WE'RE TRYING TO RESPOND TO IT IN SOME UNCLASSIFIED

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COMPREHENSIVE SAY.

Q. YOU SAID YOU'D GIVE US SOME POLICY ON THE ISSUE.

A. LET ME PUT IT MORE CONCRETELY: WE DON'T HAVE A POLICY WHICH ENCOURAGES THAT KIND OF A STEP.

Q. YOU'RE SAYING YOU DON'T KNOW BEYOND THAT -- THAT THE STEP HAS NOT BEEN ENCOURAGED?

A. YES. WHAT I'M SAYING IS THAT WE HAVE CHECKED AND CAN FIND NO INCIDENT OF IT. WE HAVE MADE A GOOD-FAITH EFFORT TO FIND OUT SINCE IT, ONE, IS NOT A MATTER OF POLICY AND THEREFORE, TWO, WE HAVE CHECKED AND WE HAVE GONE OUT AND ASKED THE SPECIFIC QUESTION OF PEOPLE IN THE FIELD. THE ANSWER IS THEY KNOW OF NOTHING.

Q. YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE ARMS SALE, RIGHT?

A. YES.

Q. THE SECRETARY'S STATEMENT OF SATURDAY SAID THE PERPETRATORS SHOULD RECEIVE THE PUNISHMENT THEY DESERVE. WOULDN'T THIS BE ENCOURAGING THE ISRAELIS TO RAID SOUTHERN LEBANON? OR WHAT KIND OF PUNISHMENT WAS HE TALKING ABOUT?

A. I CAN'T GO BEYOND THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT. I THINK IT'S CLEAR.

Q. NO. THE SECRETARY'S STATEMENT.

A. THE SECRETARY'S STATEMENT. I THINK THAT'S VERY CLEAR -- EITHER ONE. IT'S PERFECTLY CLEAR. THE PUNISHMENT THEY DESERVE FOR AN ALL-OUT TERRORIST ACT IS THAT WHICH IS IMPOSED BY THE LAW.
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Q. JURIDICAL?

A. YES.

Q. COULD YOU GO BACK ON THE GEORGE WILL COLUMN?

A. YES. AS A MATTER OF FACT, JOHN WAS HERE ALL DAY YESTERDAY. DO YOU WANT TO DEAL WITH IT, JOHN?

MR. TRATTNER: JUST GOING BACK TO ONE OF THE QUESTIONS JUST A COUPLE OF SECONDS AGO, HE ASKED IF YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT THE ARMS. I THINK THE ARMS THING IS, CATEGORICALLY, THAT NO SUCH REQUEST HAS EVER BEEN MADE. I THINK THE OIL IS THE THING ON WHICH WE MADE THE GOOD-FAITH CHECK.

Q. YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT TWO THINGS IN YOUR ANSWER.

A. LET ME SAY ON BOTH I'M SAYING, AS A MATTER OF ABSOLUTE POLICY, THERE IS NO SUCH POLICY.

Q. DIDN'T THIS ARISE WHEN SENATOR MOYNIHAN MADE A SPEECH A FEW MONTHS AGO?

A. IT HAS PERIODICALLY ARISEN, AS A MATTER OF FACT. PERIODICALLY. I REMEMBER IT ARISING AT SOME POINT LAST FALL, NOT IN RELATION TO THAT, BUT YOU SAW THAT IT APPEARED ONE DAY IN SEVERAL PAPERS IN ANOTHER COUNTRY, AND THEN IT SORT OF ENTERED THE MAINSTREAM OF BELIEF IN SOME AREAS.

Q. CAN YOU GIVE US THE COMPREHENSIVE REACTION OF THE
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STATE DEPARTMENT AS DEVELOPED TO THAT COLUMN?

A. I'M GOING TO OFFER IT TO THAT COLUMN FIRST.

Q. ON A COUPLE OF OCCASIONS NOW DURING THIS BRIEFING, YOU SEEM TO HAVE LEFT US WITH SOME DELIBERATE AMBIGUITY ON THE QUESTION OR ON THE ISSUE OF AN ISRAELI

RETALIATORY RAID, AMBIGUITY IN THE SENSE THAT YOU HAVE NOT RULED OUT AN ISRAELI RAID AGAINST GUERRILLA FORCES SPECIFICALLY. YOU SEEM TO HAVE RULED IT OUT THE INNOCENTS. I REALIZE YOU'RE ADDRESSED THAT QUESTION TWICE, BUT I WANT TO GIVE YOU ONE MORE CHANCE TO RESPOND TO IT IN SOMEWHAT LESS AMBIGUOUS TERMS.

A. I THINK THAT THE EXACT STATEMENT THAT I OFFERED IS THE BEST I AM GOING TO BE ABLE TO DO ON IT, AND THEREFORE, WHATEVER REMAINS REMAINS.

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AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

UNCLAS STATE 064372

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 064372 SENT ACTION AMMAN BEIRUT CAIRO DAMASCUS JERUSALEM JIDDA ETEL AVIV MANAMA RABAT SANA TEHRAN TRIPOLI TUNIS SINAI DHAHRAN GENEVA KHARTOUM LONDON ALEXANDRIA MOSCOW USNATO NOUAKCHOTT PARIS ROME USUN ABU DHABI ALGIERS BAGHDAD DOHA KUWAIT USCINCEUR JCS DOD CIA USIA NSC MAR 14.

QUOTEUNCLAS STATE 064372

CINCEUR FOR POLAD, TEL AVIV FOR PAO, DELIVER BY 9 A.M.

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - MARCH 13

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR MARCH 13, 1978. FYI ONLY, SPOKESMAN TODAY WAS HODDING CARTER III.

Q. HAS THE UNITED STATES QUESTIONED OR CHALLENGED SAUDI

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FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE PLO? HAVE WE EVER CRITICIZED?

LET'S PUT THE QUESTION A DIFFERENT WAY. IT IS ESTABLISHED, AS FAR AS I KNOW, THAT SAUDI ARABIA HAS GIVEN FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE PLO, SUPPORT THAT AMBASSADOR WEST WAS TOLD WAS PRIMARILY FOR REFUGEES. I ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT THE AMBASSADOR WHEN HE APPEARED ON THE HILL LAST THURSDAY SAID THAT AS FAR AS HE KNEW THE UNITED STATES HAD NEVER QUESTIONED, IN THE SENSE OF CHALLENGE, CRITICIZED THAT AID. DO YOU KNOW, DOES THE UNITED STATES STATE DEPARTMENT KNOW WHETHER SAUDI ARABIA HAS GIVEN FINANCIAL AID TO THE PLO FOR ANY REASON?

A. LET ME SAY THAT I DO NOT HAVE A FACTUAL ANSWER ON THAT ONE FOR YOU. I WOULD NOT WANT TO VENTURE A GUESS OF HOW IT WOULD COME. I WILL TAKE THE QUESTION.

Q. WHAT EFFECT WILL THE WEEKEND EVENTS HAVE UPON THE PEACE PROCESS?

A. LET ME SAY A COUPLE OF THINGS ABOUT THAT. THE ACT OF VIOLENCE IS CLEARLY AIMED AT UNDERMINING THE EFFORTS TO REACH A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT. ACTS SUCH AS THESE AND THIS ONE IN PARTICULAR ONLY INCREASE TENSIONS AND CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF BITTERNESS NOT CONDUCTIVE TO NEGOTIATIONS FOR A GENUINE PEACE SETTLEMENT.

HAVING SAID THAT, I WANT TO ADD THAT WE DO NOT INTEND TO ALLOW THIS ACT TO ACHIEVE ITS AIM, ITS AIM OF UNDERMINING THE PEACE PROCESS. OUR EFFORTS WILL CONTINUE AND WE HOPE ALL THOSE COMMITTED TO A COMPREHENSIVE AND JUST SETTLEMENT WILL ALSO KEEP THEIR EYES ON THIS GOAL.
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Q. HAS THIS GOVERNMENT BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL ABOUT A POSSIBLE RETALIATORY RAID?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO GO INTO DETAILS OF OUR DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS WITH ISRAEL OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT IN THE AREA. I WANT TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT IT THOUGH.

THE TERRORIST ACT OBVIOUSLY PRESENTS ISRAEL WITH A VERY PAINFUL AND SERIOUS DILEMMA. IT HAS LEGITIMATE SECURITY INTERESTS WHICH MUST BE PROTECTED. AT THE SAME TIME NO ONE WANTS TO ADD TO THE SUFFERING AND LOSS OF INNOCENT LIVES ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

Q. WELL, IN OTHER WORDS, ARE YOU TRYING TO DISCOURAGE ISRAEL FROM TAKING DIRECT RETALIATION AGAINST THE REFUGEE CAMP, FOR EXAMPLE?

A. AGAIN, I AM REALLY NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH ISRAEL OR OTHER PARTIES IN THAT AREA. I THINK THAT WHAT I HAVE JUST SAID CONSTITUTES MY ANSWER.

Q. YOUR STATEMENT REFERS TO SECURITY INTERESTS OF ISRAEL. HAS THE TERRORIST ATTACK ON ISRAEL, WHICH OBVIOUSLY WAS A BREACH OF SECURITY, CAUSED THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO RECONSIDER ITS POSITION THAT THE SETTLEMENTS AND THE AIR FIELDS AND OTHER MEASURES WHICH ISRAEL

CONSIDERS TO BE SECURITY PROTECTIVE -- HAS THE STATE DEPARTMENT BEEN CAUSED TO RECONSIDER ITS POSITION THAT THOSE SETTLEMENTS AND THAT THOSE AIR FIELDS SHOULD BE REMOVED, ARE ILLEGAL, ARE AN OBSTACLE TO PEACE OR ARE YOU NEWLY AWARE OR NEWLY CONSCIOUS OF ISRAEL'S SECURITY PROBLEMS SO THAT MAYBE THERE IS A CAUSE FOR THEM TO TAKE CERTAIN SECURITY MEASURES YOU DIDN'T SEE LAST WEEK?
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A. NO. I THINK THAT I WOULD REPEAT WHAT A SENIOR OFFICIAL SAID TO A NUMBER OF YOU LATE LAST WEEK BEFORE THE RAIDS; THAT THERE ARE OBVIOUS AND LEGITIMATE SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE AREA; THAT ISRAEL HAS SUCH INTERESTS. OUR POSITION IN ANY CASE HAS BEEN THAT WHILE WE HAVE AND CONTINUE TO HAVE POSITIONS ON SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS WHICH WE HAVE MADE CLEAR, THAT THE ISSUES THEMSELVES MUST BE RESOLVED IN DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTIES AND THAT WHAT I WOULD SAY IN PARTIAL RESPONSE TO YOU ONLY IS THAT THIS PARTICULARLY BRUTAL ACT OF TERRORISM SIMPLY MUST NOT BE PERMITTED TO PREVENT THOSE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE MATTERS THAT YOU RAISE AND OTHER ISSUES IN DISPUTE IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

Q. WOULD YOU SAY THEN THAT ISRAEL'S SECURITY WOULD BE ENHANCED IF IT, FOR INSTANCES, WITHDREW FROM THE WEST BANK, PERMITTED A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND TO BE SET UP? THAT SAME OFFICIAL SAID THAT THE UNITED STATES DOESN'T WANT THE WEST BANK TO BE A STAGING GROUND FOR PALESTINIAN RADICALS. BUT THERE IS SOMEWHAT OF A GAP BETWEEN THAT AND WITHDRAWAL. WOULD YOU THINK THAT WOULD ENHANCE ISRAEL'S SECURITY?

A. I THINK THE GENERAL ANSWER TO THE QUESTION IS TWO-FOLD. THE VIOLENCE WHICH WE DEPLORE DOES NOT CHANGE THE POSITIONS WHICH WE HAVE STATED A NUMBER OF TIMES AND WHICH I REALLY DON'T SEE MUCH POINT IN GOING THROUGH AGAIN. I CAN JUST SAY IN A BLANKET WAY THAT THE LITANY

IS UNCHANGED.

Q. AND IT DOESN'T CHANGE OUR VIEW OF ISRAELI SECURITY?
WHATEVER OUR VIEW IS OF ISRAELI SECURITY NEEDS TERRITORIA-
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LLY, THEY REMAIN THE SAME?

A. OUR POSITION HAS BEEN STATED HERE A NUMBER OF TIMES.
IT IS UNCHANGED.

Q. HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR POSITION ABOUT SAUDI ARABIA
BEING A CONFRONTATION STATE IN LIGHT OF THEIR COMMENTS
REGARDING THE TERRORIST ACT AND DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO
SAY ABOUT THE SAUDI COMMENTS?

A. YES. ACTUALLY WE NOTE THAT THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR
ALIREZA PUT OUT A STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT IN WHICH HE
SAID THAT ALL SENSIBLE PEOPLE DEPLORE ACTS OF TERRORISM.
HE HAS SINCE TALKED TO HIS FOREIGN MINISTER. HE HAS
CONFIRMED THAT THE RIYADH RADIO COMMENT TO WHICH YOU
REFER DOES NOT REFLECT THE OFFICIAL SAUDI POSITION.
THE OFFICIAL POSITION IS CONTAINED IN AMBASSADOR
ALIREZA'S (STATEMENT).

BUT LET ME GO ON, HOWEVER, AND JUST POINT OUT GENERALLY
THAT WE WOULD, OF COURSE, AND DO REGRET ANY STATEMENTS
OF SUPPORT FOR AN ACT OF WANTON TERRORISM. I HAVE,
HOWEVER, I THINK, DEALT WITH TWO PARTS OF THE QUESTION.

Q. THERE IS NO DOUBT, IS THERE, IN THE UNITED
STATES' MIND THERE WAS SUCH A STATEMENT?

A. I JUST SAID SO. I JUST SAID IT WAS REPUDIATED.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHETHER THE AMBASSADOR'S STATEMENT WAS
BROADCAST OVER RIYADH RADIO?

A. I HAVE NOTHING FURTHER AT THIS POINT. TO TELL YOU
THE TRUTH, FINDING THAT ONE ON THE FILE WAS A LITTLE
INTERESTING, THE ORIGINAL STATEMENT TO CONFIRM THAT IT
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WAS, IN FACT, AS SAID.

I HAVE HERE THAT THE AMBASSADOR TALKED TO HIS FOREIGN
MINISTER AND THAT WHAT HE SAID IS THE OFFICIAL SAUDI
POSITION. I DO NOT KNOW THE ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION.

Q. I WAS SIMPLY TRYING TO FIND OUT IF THAT OFFICIAL SAUDI POSITION HAS ALSO BEEN BROADCAST TO THE ARAB WORLD.

A. I DON'T KNOW.

Q. EVEN IF THAT STATEMENT WAS UNOFFICIAL, DOES IT CHANGE THE STATE DEPARTMENT THINKING AT ALL ABOUT SAUDI ARABIA?

A. NO.

Q. WHY NOT?

A. WAIT A MINUTE. I AM NOT SURE WHY I HAVE TO ANSWER THAT.

Q. WELL, IT IS STILL AN EXPRESSION OF A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF THINKING IN SAUDI ARABIA, IS IT NOT, THE FIRST EXPRESSION?

A. I CAN'T GUAGE WHAT IT REFLECTS. WHAT I AM SAYING IS I AM TOLD IT DOES NOT REFLECT THE OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT POSITION ON THIS RAID. AS TO WHO IT REFLECTS, I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO SPECULATE.

Q. IS THERE A FIRM TIME SET YET ON PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S TRIP HERE?
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A. YES. IT IS GOING TO BE REPEATED AS A DUPLICATE BUT ONE WEEK LATER, I.E. THE SCHEDULED ARRIVAL IS MONDAY NIGHT OF NEXT WEEK AND THE SCHEDULE RUNNING FOR TWO DAYS THEREAFTER.

Q. MONDAY NIGHT WHERE? IN WASHINGTON?

A. HERE. AS I UNDERSTAND, THE ENTIRE SCHEDULE IS JUST SIMPLY PUT UP A WEEK.

Q. MONDAY AFTERNOON?

A. MONDAY 4:30 OR WHATEVER IT WAS.

Q. TO GO BACK A PREVIOUS QUESTION ABOUT OUR APPROACHES TO THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT ABOUT RETALIATION, HAS SECRETARY VANCE SEEN AMBASSADOR DINITZ SINCE THE COMMANDO RAID OR TALKED WITH HIM?

A. I AM NOT AWARE OF HIS SEEING HIM, THAT IS, PHYSICALLY BEING IN HERE. JOHN, DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING?

MR. TRATTNER: HE TALKED WITH HIM ON THE TELEPHONE

YESTERDAY.

Q. HAVE YOU RECEIVED ANY INFORMATION FROM THEM ON ANY RETALIATORY ACTION?

A. NO.

Q. YOUR ORIGINAL STATEMENT ABOUT THE RETALIATION IN

WHICH YOU SAY AT THE SAME TIME NO ONE WANTS TO ADD TO THE SUFFERING AND LOSS OF INNOCENT LIVES ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD, ARE YOU IMPLYING A DISTINCTION BETWEEN AN UNCLASSIFIED

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ISRAELI RETALIATION AGAINST COMBATANTS OR GUERRILLAS AND A RETALIATION AGAINST WHAT YOU CALL INNOCENT LIVES, PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT INVOLVED? IS THERE SOME DISTINCTION IN HERE THAT YOU ARE TRYING TO SUGGEST?

A. I THINK OBVIOUSLY WHAT THE STATEMENT IS SEEKING TO DO IS TO ADDRESS EXACTLY WHAT IT ADDRESSES. I MEAN I DON'T THINK I CAN READ ANYTHING FURTHER INTO IT THAN WHAT IT SAYS.

Q. IT SOULDS TO ME IF THEY CAN MAKE A PRECISE ENOUGH STRIKE WHERE THEY ONLY HIT THE PLO AND NOT INNOCENT LIVES, THAT WE ENDORSE THAT FROM THIS STATEMENT.

A. I AM REALLY NOT IN A POSITION TO SAY ANYTHING OF THE SORT.

Q. ARAFAT AND THE PLO SEEM TO BE TAKING CREDIT FOR THE RAID. DOES THIS EXCLUDE THEM FOR ALL TIMES IN THE AMERICAN EYES FROM THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS?

A. LET ME JUST SIMPLY SAY THAT ANYONE WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS RAID IS AUTOMATICALLY INCLUDED IN THE TOTAL CONDEMNATION THAT WE HAVE EXPRESSED FOR ITS EFFECTS AND THE FACT OF IT.

Q. HAVE YOU FIGURED OUT WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS RAID YET?

A. OBVIOUSLY WE HAVE SEEN A NUMBER OF REPORTS.

Q. BUT I MEAN, DO YOU CREDIT THEM?

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A. DO I HAVE AN ASSESSMENT AT THIS TIME? NO, I DO NOT

HAVE ONE.

Q. WE ALL HAVE REPORTS. DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAVE A JUDGMENT AS TO WHO PAID FOR THE RAID AND WHO CARRIED IT OUT? DO YOU KNOW THAT?

A. I DON'T. OBVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO ISRAELI SOURCES, THAT THERE WERE CERTAIN PEOPLE INVOLVED. AS TO WHO THEY REPRESENTED -- MORE THAN THAT I DON'T HAVE IT NOW. I WOULD EXPECT THAT OVER THE COMING DAYS WE ARE GOING TO GET A LOT CLEARERE PICTURE.

Q. WELL WHAT ARE YOU CONDEMNING? YOU ARE CONDEMNING THE ACT?

A. THAT'S RIGHT.

Q. AND YOU ARE CONDEMNING THE DEAD TERRORISTS.

A. AND I AM CONDEMNING WHOEVER IS RESPONSIBLE.

Q. AND THAT'S ABOUT AS FAR AS IT GOES -- AND WHOEVER MIGHT BE RESPONSIBLE, BUT YOU DON'T KNOW WHO THAT IS YET.

A. NOT YET.

Q. WHAT DOES THIS DO ABOUT THE FUTURE NEGOTIATING POSITION OF THE PLO AS FAR AS THIS GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED? YOU JUST SAID THAT THE CONDEMNATION COVERS ANYBODY RESPONSIBLE. BUT YOU DIDN'T ANSWER ABOUT THE FUTURE NEGOTIATING ASPECT.

A. WELL WAIT A MINUTE. I HAVE NOTHING TO ADD BEYOND THE STANDARD FORMULATION THAT WE HAVE USED IN ANY UNCLASSIFIED

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CASE, ABOUT THE PLO.

Q. SO YOU ARE SAYING THAT THIS DOES NOT CHANGE THAT STANDARD FORMULATION IN ANY WAY OR SHAPE.

A. IN THE FIRST PLACE, I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO SAY THAT THIS IS, IN FACT, DIRECTLY LINKED OR NOT DIRECTLY LINKED, TO ANY PARTICULAR ORGANIZATION. I WILL SAY GENERALLY, YOU KNOW, BARRING CLEAR INFORMATION WHICH MIGHT ESTABLISH SOMETHING, THAT THE FORMULATION WE HAVE ALWAYS USED REMAINS THE SAME.

Q. THERE IS A REPORT OUT OF BEIRUT THAT THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE MOVEMENT HAS AFFIRMED THAT THE NEXT FEW DAYS WILL WITNESS FURTHER FEDAYEEN OPERATIONS AGAINST ISRAEL.

HAS THE STATE DEPARTMENT SEEN THAT REPORT?

A. OH, I AM CONFIDENT IT HAS BEEN SEEN, BUT WE WOULD SIMPLY SAY IN ADVANCE THAT THAT WOULD BE MORE THAN REGRETTABLE. IT WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE. BUT LOOK, I HAVE NO IDEA OF THE SOURCE FOR THAT.

Q. IS THE UNITED STATES MAKING ANY REPRESENTATION TO AUTHORITIES IN LEBANON?

A. AGAIN, I AM NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO GO INTO THE DIRECT SUBSTANCE OF DISCUSSIONS, BUT WE HAVE CLEARLY HAD DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON.

Q. WHAT IS THE LEBANON CONCERN ON THIS QUARTER? ARE WE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM?

A. THEY HAVE A GENERAL CONCERN ABOUT THE SITUATION.
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Q. HAS THE UNITED STATES SOUGHT TO DISSUADE ISRAEL FROM TAKING RETALIATORY ACTION?

A. AGAIN, I REALLY AM NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO GO BEYOND THE STATEMENT -- IN EITHER CONFIRMING OR DENYING BOTH THE REPORT THAT I THINK WE ALL SAW -- OR RESPONDING MORE DIRECTLY TO YOUR QUESTION.

Q. IN YOUR ANSWER BEFORE YOU SAID THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAS A GENERAL CONCERN. DO YOU MEAN CONCERN RESPONSIBILITY, OR CONCERN ANXIETY?

A. CONCERN ABOUT THE WHOLE SITUATION.

Q. WELL CONCERN MEANS TWO THINGS, IT'S AN AMBIGUOUS WORD. DO THEY HAVE SOME RESPONSIBILITY? OR DO YOU MEAN THAT THEY ARE ANXIOUS AS TO WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN NEXT?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO RAISE THE QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY BECAUSE WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW AND WHAT I DON'T KNOW -- AND WHAT IN FACT AT THIS TIME APPARENTLY NOBODY SEEMS TO KNOW IS -- THE STAGING AREA, OR THE HOME PORT, OR ANYTHING ELSE ABOUT THE TERRORISTS THEMSELVES.

Q. BUT YOU KEEP DECLINING TO ANSWER THE QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER WE HAVE ASKED THE ISRAELIS NOT TO RETALIATE. WHAT IS THIS GOVERNMENT'S VIEW ABOUT WHAT EFFECT AN ISRAELI RETALIATION WOULD HAVE ON THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORT?

A. THE GENERAL VIEW THAT I HAVE IS THAT ANY COMMENTS I

MIGHT MAKE ON THE SPECULATION OF WHAT MIGHT BE OUR VIEW,
ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN -- IF SOMETHING HAPPENS -- ISN'T
GOING TO BE USEFUL IN THIS SITUATION. I DON'T HAVE ONE.
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Q. IN YOUR OWN JUDGMENT, ARE YOU SAYING THAT LEBANON
HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH THAT RAID?

A. I HAVE NO JUDGMENT ON THE QUESTION WHATSOEVER. I
AM NOT OFFERING A JUDGMENT.

Q. WELL WE'VE GOT TO HAVE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE
PLO AND LEBANON -- AND THE LEBANESE PEOPLE AND LEBANON
ITSELF.

A. THERE ARE CLEAR DISTINCTIONS ALONG THAT LINE.

Q. BECAUSE MANY REPORTS HAVE INDICATED, IT SOUNDS LIKE
THE LEBANESE PEOPLE ARE ATTACKING THE ISRAELIS FROM
LEBANON.

A. AS A MATTER OF FACT, I AM NOT HERE SAYING WHO IS
ATTACKING, BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW.

Q. YOU DON'T ACCEPT, IN OTHER WORDS, THE STATEMENTS
ATTRIBUTED TO THE PLO, THAT IT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT?

A. I AM IN NO WAY TO JUDGE REPORTS WHICH COME OFTEN
FROM UNIDENTIFIED, SUPPOSED SOURCES, AND THE OTHER.
I SIMPLY AM NOT NOW IN A POSITION TO JUDGE WHO IS
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RAID. THAT IS UNDOUBTEDLY GOING
TO CHANGE.

Q. BY WHAT? WHAT WOULD HAPPEN?

A. CHANGED, I ASSUME, BY PEOPLE IN FACT STEPPING
FORWARD AND SAYING CONCRETELY, "YES", "NO," OR
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INDIFFERENTLY -- OR BY THE ISRAELIS ESTABLISHING SOME-
THING ON THE BASIS OF PEOPLE THAT THEY HAVE IN THEIR
CUSTODY.

Q. HAVE YOU RAISED THIS ISSUE WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF
SYRIA?

A. I DON'T KNOW.

Q. HAVE YOU HEARD ANYTHING FROM EGYPT ON THE ISRAELIS--
ANYTHING THAT HASN'T BEEN PUBLISHED? HAS EGYPT SAID

ANYTHING, MADE ANY COMMENTS?

A. I AM NOT AWARE OF ANY.

Q. NOW THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED WRITTEN REACTION FROM

THE HILL ON THE PROPOSED PLANE DEAL INVOLVING EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA AND ISRAEL, IS THERE ANY CONSIDERATION BEING GIVEN TO DELAYING THE (INAUDIBLE) TO CONGRESS?

A. NO, ABSOLUTELY NOT.

Q. REGARDING SAUDI ARABIA, WHAT I'D LIKE TO KNOW IS WHETHER THE STATE DEPARTMENT KNOWS IF SAUDI ARABIA IS FINANCING THE PLO? DOES IT KNOW IF THAT MONEY GOES TO PALESTINIAN REFUGEES OR/AND TO TERRORISTS? HOW WOULD THE STATE DEPARTMENT KNOW HOW THE MONEY IS APPORTIONED IF IT AGREES WITH THE AMBASSADOR, OR IF IT IS AS THE AMBASSADOR HAS BEEN TOLD, THE MONEY GOES TO REFUGEES? YOU HAVE REFERRED HERE TO CONVERSATIONS WITH ISRAEL AND WITH LEBANON REGARDING THE TERRORIST INCIDENT AND ITS AFTERMATH. CAN YOU TELL US WHAT OTHER GOVERNMENTS THE UNITED STATES HAS TALKED TO SINCE THE ATTACK?

A. I DOUBT THAT I HAVE A COMPLETE LISTING, BUT LET ME UNCLASSIFIED

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SEE WHAT I CAN GET ON THAT. ON THE OTHER QUESTIONS, I'M NOT SURE WHAT OUR POSTURE NORMALLY IS ABOUT THAT. I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN GET.

Q. I THINK THERE WILL BE MORE CONTROVERSY, AS THE DAY GOES ON, FROM THE HILL ON THE SUBJECT. IT'S BEEN GOING ON SINCE YESTERDAY AFTERNOON.

Q. THE THRUST OF THAT QUESTION REALLY IS, IF THE SAUDI ARABIANS ARE FINANCING THE PLO, SHOULD THE UNITED STATES SELL IT PLANES?

A. THAT IS NOT THE THRUST OF MY QUESTION.

A. I KNOW THE THRUST OF THE QUESTION. IT'S WHERE THE ANSWERS WILL TAKE US.

Q. THAT IS NOT THE THRUST OF MY QUESTION. IT MAY BE WHY THE HILL IS SO HOT ON THE SUBJECT RIGHT NOW. BUT I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT OUR STAUNCH, MODERATING FORCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND ANY SUPPORT IT MAY BE GIVING TO THE PLO. THAT'S WHY I'M ASKING.

A. I'VE GOT IT.

Q. WOULD THE UNITED STATES GO ALONG WITH ISRAEL RADING SOUTHERN LEBANON?

A. WHAT I AM SAYING TO YOU IS THAT MY POSITION ON THIS

ENTIRE SUBJECT HAS ALREADY BEEN ARTICULATED. WE, OF COURSE, OBVIOUSLY, CONTINUE TO HOPE FOR A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF ALL MATTERS. BEYOND THAT, THOUGH, THERE UNCLASSIFIED

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IS NOTHING I CAN SAY.

Q. IN RESPONSE TO A COLUMN YESTERDAY IN THE "POST," THERE ARE A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS: HAS THE UNITED STATES BEEN, IN ANY WAY, ENCOURAGING IRAN TO CUT BACK ON OIL SHIPMENTS TO ISRAEL AS FORCED CONCESSIONS AND HAS THE UNITED STATES, AS THIS COLUMN SAYS, URGED CERTAIN COUNTRIES NOT TO BUY WEAPONS FROM ISRAEL?

A. NO.

Q. TO BOTH?

A. YES. THERE IS NO OFFICIAL POLICY OF THIS GOVERNMENT -- AND LET ME TRY TO DISTINGUISH SOME THINGS HERE, BECAUSE I WILL CONCEDE SOMETHING AND THEN GO FORWARD AND SAY NO, ANYWAY. NO, THERE IS NO POLICY TO DO SO.

NO, WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY SUCH INCIDENTS HAVING HAPPENED. AND THEN, I AM TOTALLY INCAPABLE OF TELLING YOU THAT SOMEBODY AT SOME LEVEL SOME TIME MAY NOT HAVE SAID SUCH A THING. I'M SIMPLY TELLING YOU, NO ONE HAS EVER BEEN AUTHORIZED, THAT ANYBODY IN THIS BUILDING KNOWS ABOUT, TO SAY SUCH A THING. WE ARE NOT AWARE OF IT HAPPENING, AND WE HAVE CHECKED. I MEAN, OBVIOUSLY, THE COLUMN CAUSECD QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED AND WE ASKED THEM.

Q. YOU'RE NOT SPEAKING ABOUT IRAN OR THE OTHER MATTER, OR BOTH?

A. I'M SPEAKING ABOUT THE ARMS MATTER, AND I JUST SIMPLY DON'T KNOW. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF ATTENTION PAID TO THAT COLUMN YESTERDAY AND I THINK WE'RE TRYING TO RESPOND TO IT IN SOME COMPREHENSIVE SAY. UNCLASSIFIED

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Q. YOU SAID YOU'D GIVE US SOME POLICY ON THE ISSUE.

A. LET ME PUT IT MORE CONCRETELY: WE DON'T HAVE A POLICY WHICH ENCOURAGES THAT KIND OF A STEP.

Q. YOU'RE SAYING YOU DON'T KNOW BEYOND THAT -- THAT THE STEP HAS NOT BEEN ENCOURAGED?

A. YES. WHAT I'M SAYING IS THAT WE HAVE CHECKED AND CAN FIND NO INCIDENT OF IT. WE HAVE MADE A GOOD-FAITH EFFORT TO FIND OUT SINCE IT, ONE, IS NOT A MATTER OF POLICY AND THEREFORE, TWO, WE HAVE CHECKED AND WE HAVE GONE OUT AND ASKED THE SPECIFIC QUESTION OF PEOPLE IN THE FIELD. THE ANSWER IS THEY KNOW OF NOTHING.

Q. YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE ARMS SALE, RIGHT?

A. YES.

Q. THE SECRETARY'S STATEMENT OF SATURDAY SAID THE PERPETRATORS SHOULD RECEIVE THE PUNISHMENT THEY DESERVE. WOULDN'T THIS BE ENCOURAGING THE ISRAELIS TO RAID SOUTHERN LEBANON? OR WHAT KIND OF PUNISHMENT WAS HE TALKING ABOUT?

A. I CAN'T GO BEYOND THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT. I THINK IT'S CLEAR.

Q. NO. THE SECRETARY'S STATEMENT.

A. THE SECRETARY'S STATEMENT. I THINK THAT'S VERY CLEAR -- EITHER ONE. IT'S PERFECTLY CLEAR. THE UNCLASSIFIED

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PUNISHMENT THEY DESERVE FOR AN ALL-OUT TERRORIST ACT IS THAT WHICH IS IMPOSED BY THE LAW.

Q. JURIDICAL?

A. YES.

Q. COULD YOU GO BACK ON THE GEORGE WILL COLUMN?

A. YES. AS A MATTER OF FACT, JOHN WAS HERE ALL DAY YESTERDAY. DO YOU WANT TO DEAL WITH IT, JOHN?

MR. TRATTNER: JUST GOING BACK TO ONE OF THE QUESTIONS JUST A COUPLE OF SECONDS AGO, HE ASKED IF YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT THE ARMS. I THINK THE ARMS THING IS, CATEGORICALLY, THAT NO SUCH REQUEST HAS EVER BEEN MADE. I THINK THE OIL IS THE THING ON WHICH WE MADE THE GOOD-FAITH CHECK.

Q. YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT TWO THINGS IN YOUR ANSWER.

A. LET ME SAY ON BOTH I'M SAYING, AS A MATTER OF ABSOLUTE POLICY, THERE IS NO SUCH POLICY.

Q. DIDN'T THIS ARISE WHEN SENATOR MOYNIHAN MADE A SPEECH A FEW MONTHS AGO?

A. IT HAS PERIODICALLY ARISEN, AS A MATTER OF FACT. PERIODICALLY. I REMEMBER IT ARISING AT SOME POINT LAST FALL, NOT IN RELATION TO THAT, BUT YOU SAW THAT IT APPEARED ONE DAY IN SEVERAL PAPERS IN ANOTHER COUNTRY, AND THEN IT SORT OF ENTERED THE MAINSTREAM OF BELIEF IN SOME AREAS.

Q. CAN YOU GIVE US THE COMPREHENSIVE REACTION OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT AS DEVELOPED TO THAT COLUMN?
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A. I'M GOING TO OFFER IT TO THAT COLUMN FIRST.

Q. ON A COUPLE OF OCCASIONS NOW DURING THIS BRIEFING, YOU SEEM TO HAVE LEFT US WITH SOME DELIBERATE AMBIGUITY ON THE QUESTION OR ON THE ISSUE OF AN ISRAELI RETALIATORY RAID, AMBIGUITY IN THE SENSE THAT YOU HAVE NOT RULED OUT AN ISRAELI RAID AGAINST GUERRILLA FORCES SPECIFICALLY. YOU SEEM TO HAVE RULED IT OUT THE INNOCENTS. I REALIZE YOU'RE ADDRESSED THAT QUESTION TWICE, BUT I WANT TO GIVE YOU ONE MORE CHANCE TO RESPOND TO IT IN SOMEWHAT LESS AMBIGUOUS TERMS.

A. I THINK THAT THE EXACT STATEMENT THAT I OFFERED IS
THEREFORE, WHATEVER REMAINS REMAINS.VANCE UNQUOTE VANCE
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Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3166230
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - MARCH 13
TAGS: PFOR, SOPN
To: AMMAN BEIRUT MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/306a5ebb-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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